





A Storm, Coast of Zealand

THE SUBJECTIVE VIEW
OF
LANDSCAPE PAINTING

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO J. H. WEISSENBRUCH
AND ILLUSTRATIONS FROM WORKS
OF HIS IN CANADA

BY
E. B. GREENSHIELDS



MONTREAL
DENBARATS & CO., ENGRAVERS AND PRINTERS
MCMIII

12 13
213
110
140

00938633

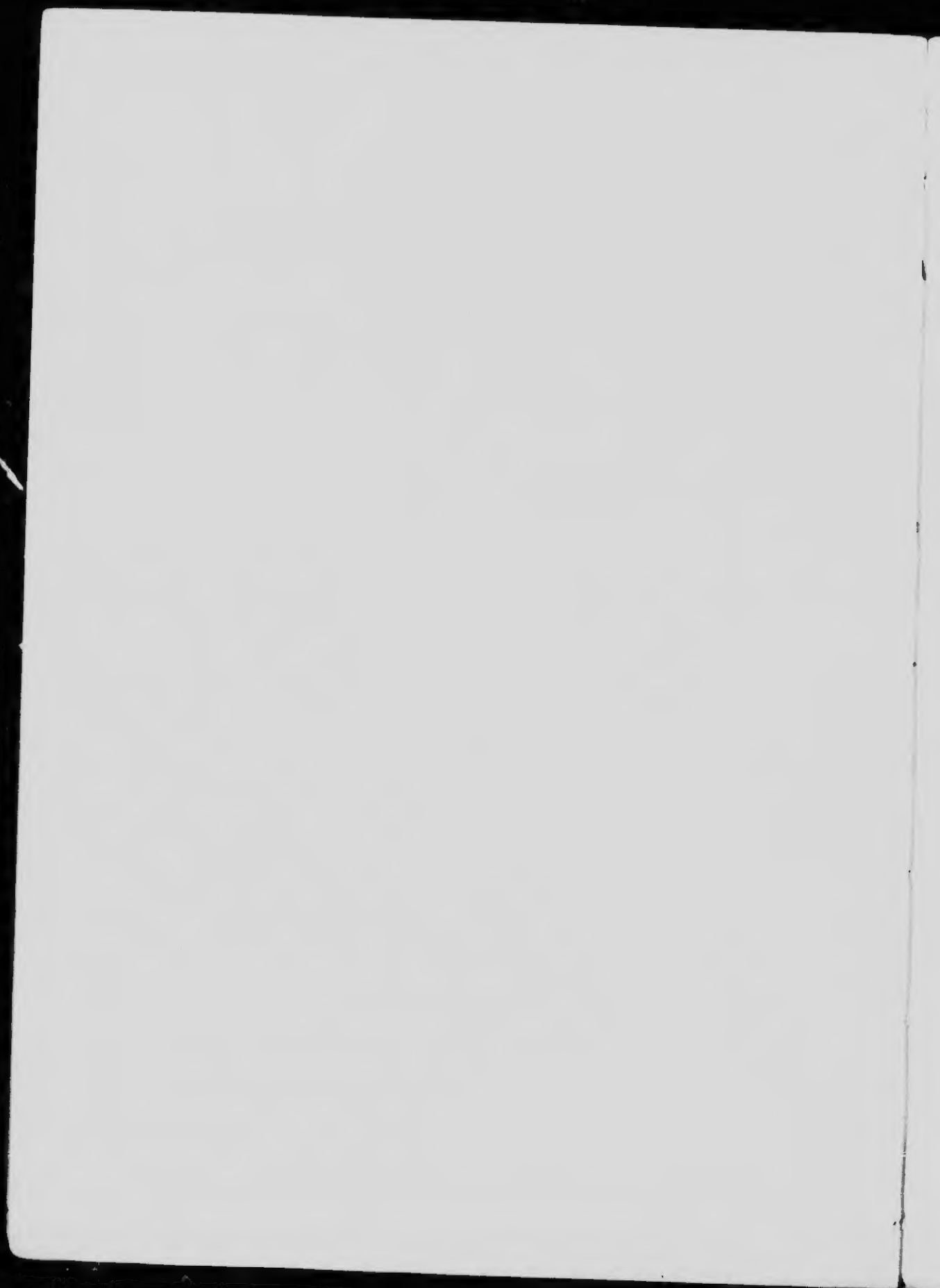
INTRODUCTORY.

The writer hopes that this little pamphlet may prove of some interest to lovers of art, and, perhaps, may bring some information that may be of use to those commencing to study pictures, and save them some time and trouble by bringing before them, in compact form the opinions of critics and writers about painting. He has always, himself, been very much obliged to anyone who has helped to shorten the road for him.

Regarding the opinions expressed about the seven Dutch artists spoken of in these pages as the great forces in modern Dutch art, he has made a study of their works for some years, and is firmly of the opinion that seldom in the world's history has a greater group of individual artists appeared. He believes that this will be the ultimate opinion of the public.

The frontispiece, from a photograph taken in 1900, shows J. H. Weissenbruch and the picture he painted for the Paris Universal Exhibition. The other portrait is from a water colour drawing by Josef Israels, made some years ago.

MONTREAL, June, 1904.





SUBJECTIVE LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

GMERSON says that "although fields and farms are owned by different men, the landscape belongs to no one, but is the common property of all who can enjoy it." This is a real and lasting possession. Its universality, its grandeur, its loneliness, its responsiveness to the moods of humanity, have drawn to it all the lovers of the beautiful in nature, and the greatest artists have striven to paint its loveliness and the manner in which their own personalities are affected by it. The actual beauty and glory of nature cannot be painted on canvas. A picture can never give this.

"Who can paint like nature?
Can imagination boast hues like hers?
Or can it mix them with that magic skill,
And lose them in each other, as appears
In every bud that blows?"

Art is something quite different. It cannot imitate nature. If it tries to do this, it must fail. But it can give the effect produced on the artist by nature. This is its proper sphere, and in this only can it excel. Landscape art does not easily shew to others these feelings of the artists. The difficulty of rendering emotion is much greater than in other branches of art. So difficult is it, that only a small number attain success, though

many have tried. The names of the really great landscape painters are few. They begin with Claude, in France, about three hundred years ago. Before his time landscape painting, as a rule, was treated as a subordinate matter, and was not known at all as the important branch of art it has since become. Ruskin fails to appreciate the greatness of Claude, or to see the ideal in his work, though he gives him credit for this remarkable fact, that he, first of all artists, put the sun in the heavens in his pictures and gives the earliest example of the study of nature for her own sake. Claude is the first great landscape painter, the first artist to realize the importance and the possibilities of the subject, and too much praise can hardly be given to the beauty and originality of his work. He is followed by Ruysdael, Hobbema and Cuyp, in Holland. Then the genius of art touches Constable and Turner, in England, and they help to inspire the originators of the Romantic movement in France, resulting in the school of 1830 — Millet, Rousseau, Daubigny, Troyon, and the great successor of Claude, Corot, who, without the imaginative power of Turner, yet idealizes more than any landscape painter before him, and gets spiritually further away than anyone from paint and brush in the scenes he depicts. Impressionism, which came afterwards in France, seems an incomplete and transitional phase of art, but will always be connected with the great names, Manet, Monet, and Degas. This brings us to the latest school of landscape art in Holland, with which we are in this essay more immediately concerned, as the most recent expression of the subjective view of landscape painting.

The appearance, some fifty years ago, of these artists showed a remarkable return in modern times of that strong tide of artistic creative feeling which spread over Holland in the seventeenth century, and produced such men as Rembrandt, Hals, Hobbema and Ruysdael. It is not their aim to emulate or copy the great men of a past age. They are full of

modern ideas, and endeavour to solve the problems of their own day, the proper pursuit for each generation of men in all things. It is vain to hark back to the days of Raphael, or earlier. If art has no new living message to give to its children, it is a dead art and useless. When sufficient time has elapsed to give a true perspective view, these men will stand out as worthy successors of the earlier grand race of artists, and they will be felt as a powerful force, carrying further on the work of the French school of 1830.

The founders of the modern Dutch school are Josef Israels, Johannes Bosboom, Anton Mauve, Matthew Maris, James Maris, William Maris and J. H. Weissenbruch. All men of striking originality, they broke away from the past traditions of art in their country, and, going direct to nature, strove, by careful study, to give a truthful view, each as he saw it, of her many changing moods. This individual way of painting what they saw makes these men the creators of a new personality in art. They form an extraordinary collection of individually great men, each painting in his own way, but preserving the most sensitive sympathy with the same fundamental truths of nature. As Turner and Constable in England, Corot and Millet and others in France, through *their* individuality of vision, showed the effect of the scenery and the people of their country upon highly sensitive and poetic natures by a wholly different revelation from anything that had been seen before, so in Holland, though the peasantry and their humble homes had been the common subjects of artists for centuries, no one saw them as they are painted by Israels until revealed by his genius. And the spacious interiors of Bosboom are equally personal to him, as are the cattle and sheep of Mauve, and the landscapes of James Maris and Weissenbruch and the sun-lit fields of William Maris to them. This is the reason of their greatness; they were original and self-revealing, their insight went further and deeper than that of others, and they painted

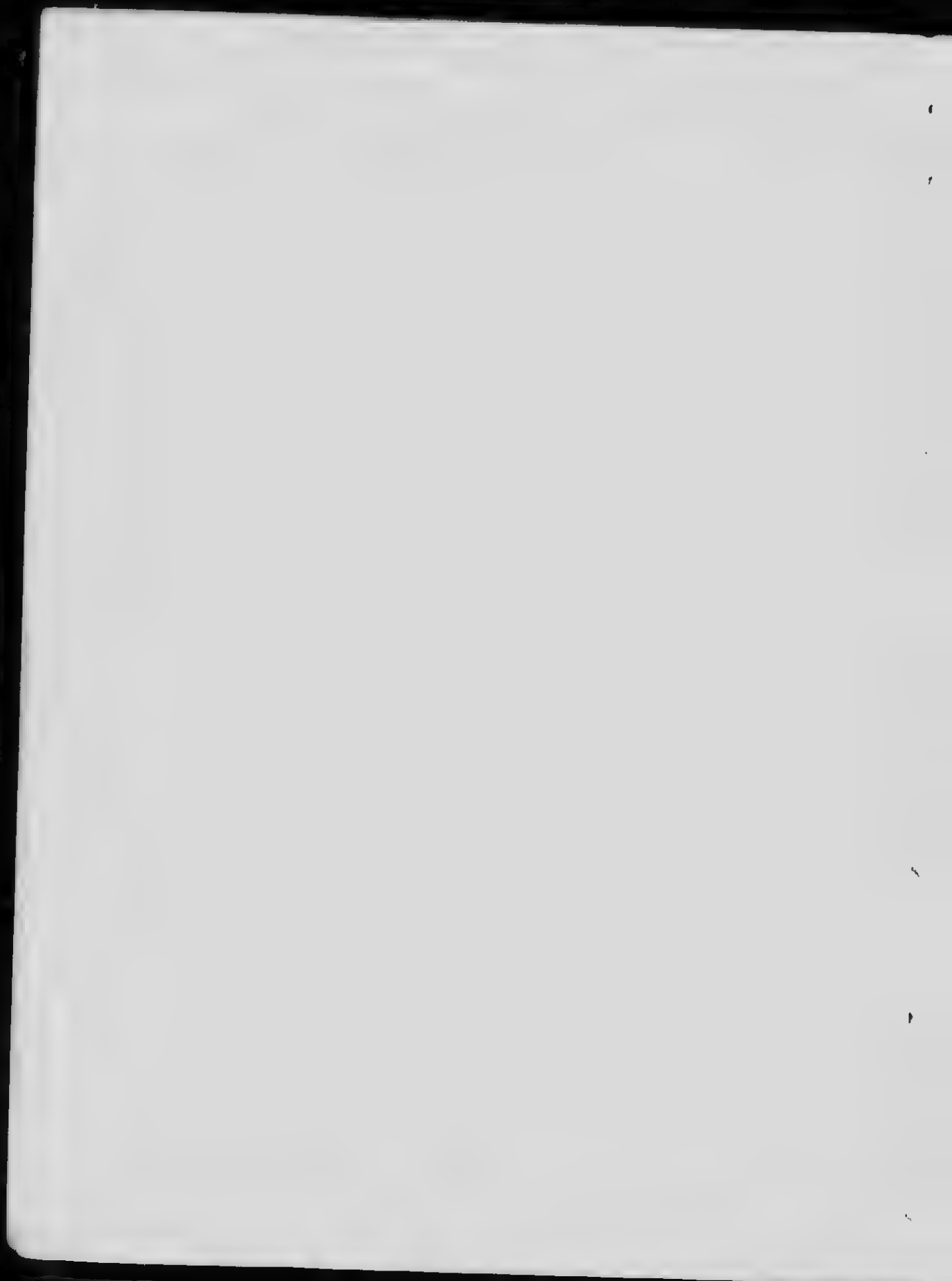
what they each saw in a way that showed how intensely their feelings were affected by the wonders and beauty of nature.

The study of nature must be the basis of all art, but it is only the foundation, and on this the artist must build. If these men had given us merely a correct topographical view of what they saw, their memory would fade with that of many other clever craftsmen. But they give us much more; for with this truthfulness to nature, subordinated to higher ends, they show to us their distinct individual interpretations, unconsciously revealing, through the gift of imagination, the effect produced on their own feelings, and awakening a responsive echo in the observers.

P. G. Hamerton tells us that after living on Loch Awe for a year, and after careful study, he painted a picture of the great mountain Ben Cruachan, that towers aloft at the upper end of the lake. He drew it with absolute fidelity. Turner painted the same mountain. To gain the real, but not the apparent truth, he disregarded local conditions. He drew the mountain too high, left out a neighbouring peak, Ben Vorich, and changed the shape of another. In literal and exact truth he was wrong, but Hamerton realized that his own fidelity to nature had only produced a topographical picture and did not give the true impression made on him. Whereas Turner had by an effort of the imagination so painted the scene as to impress the beholder with same feeling of awe and wonder that had inspired him as he looked at this guardian giant dominating one of the most beautiful of the lakes of Scotland. Hamerton felt that it was not only grander than his view, but that it was *in reality more truthful*. "I used to believe," he writes, "that if work was truthful it would *appear* truthful, and if the artist put deep feeling into his picture it would be visible to everyone. I have no remnant of these beliefs now. It becomes clear that the landscape painter must look out for compensations to counterbalance the weakness of his art in conveying the emotions



Sana But, Evening



excited by nature. Accuracy in drawing makes simple topography the inevitable result. So the artist goes to nature for suggestion and materials, and not to draw accurately, but the student-struggle for imitative skill must be over before the soul of the master can make its way through the clogging material pigments. After the first great disappointment caused by the discovery that truthful portraiture in landscape painting does not produce the impression conveyed by the natural scene, there comes a return to art, with clearer views of its true power and of its inevitable deficiency. There is something in art of an intimate character that addresses itself to our sympathetic imagination, and it is by this, rather than by the conquest of technical difficulty, that representations of landscape retain their hold on the mind." This is the position he arrived at, against his own previously strongly held opinions. He learned by experience the true view, and he states it very decidedly.

Ruskin's teaching is somewhat contradictory. He lays too much stress on accuracy of detail in leaf, tree and rock forms, as in the following, in "Modern Painters":

"Infants in judgment, we look for specific character and complete finish. As we advance, we scorn such detail altogether and look for breadth of effect. But perfected in judgment, we return in a great measure to our early feelings, and thank *Rafaëlle* for the shells upon his sacred beach, and for the delicate stamens of the herbiage beside his inspired *St. Catherine*.

"*Poussin's* picture, in which every vine-leaf is drawn with consummate skill, produces a perfect tree group.

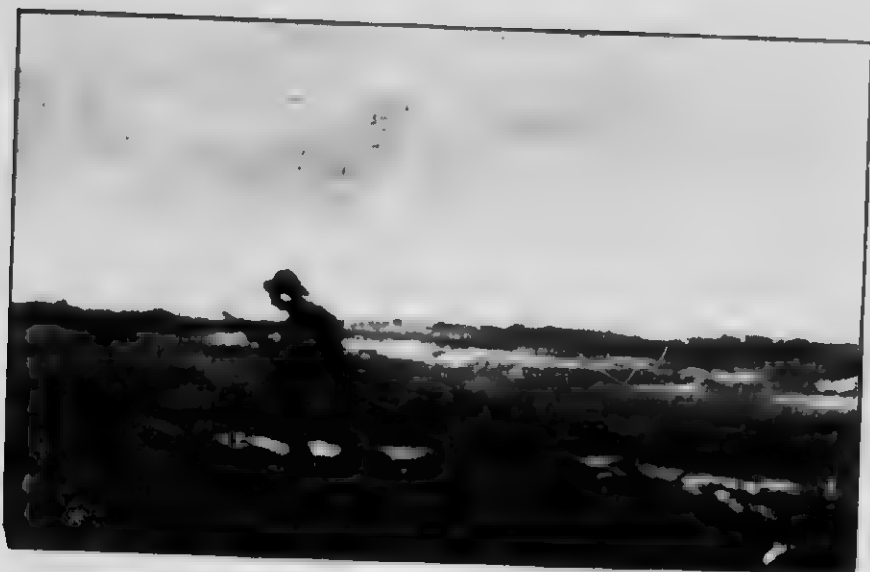
"The background of *Sir Joshua Reynold's Holy Family*, owing to the utter neglect of all botanical detail, has lost every atom of ideal character."

Too much attention is given to these matters in this beautifully-written book, and we are told he was sorry in later life, when he saw the effect that was produced by the import-

ance he placed on them. And it is to be regretted that, with all his knowledge and love for art, he was not able to see the greatness of such splendid artists as Ruysdael, Hobbema and Constable, and that he expressed such slighting opinions about their works; and also that he should speak in a similar manner of modern French landscape (see "The Art of England," published in 1884), and not seem to be able to appreciate the original and beautiful paintings of the men of 1830 in France. These mistakes and omissions detract from the value of his writings; but admitting them all, how true and fine his opinions on the whole question of art really are is shown when he comes under the spell of the overpowering genius of Turner, who, with all his knowledge, subjected everything to the higher ends of mystery and imagination. Then Ruskin gives expression to the thoughts that stir him, in such fine passages as these—and how very modern they are!

"All that is highest in art, all that is creative and imaginative, is formed and created by every great master for himself."

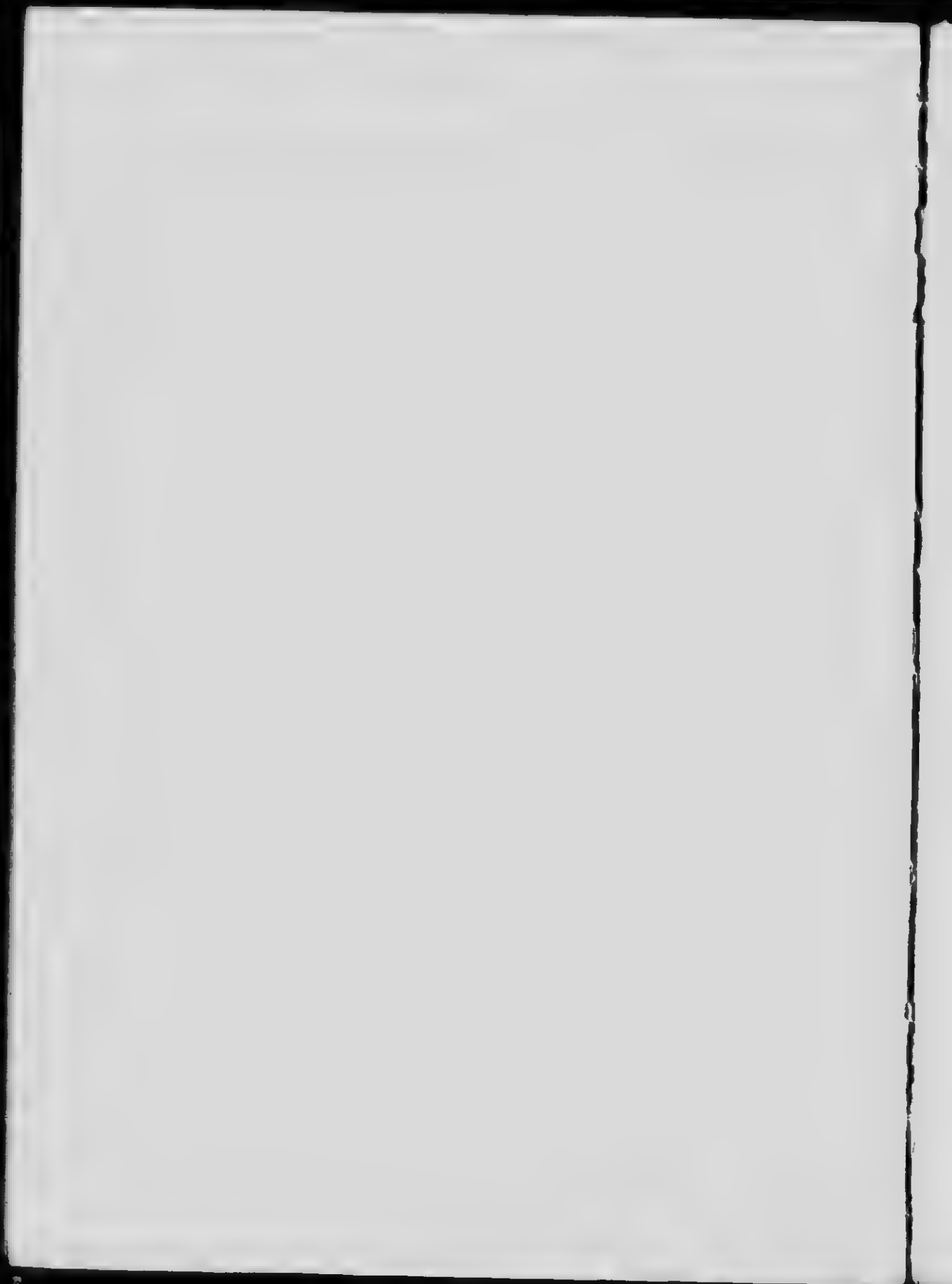
"The landscape painter must have two great and distinct aims—the first to induce in the spectator's mind the faithful conception of natural objects, and the second to inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which they were regarded by the artist himself. The artist talks to him and makes him a sharer in his own strong feelings. He endows him with the impetuous emotions of a nobler and more penetrating intelligence. The artist cannot attain the second end without having previously reached the first, and this is why, though I consider the second as the real and only important end of all art, I call the representation of facts the first end, because it is necessary to the other, and must be attained before it. And thus though we want the thoughts and feelings of the artist as well as the truth, yet they must be thoughts arising out of the knowledge of truth, and feelings arising out of the contemplation of truth."



H. M. M. M.



Village of Nieuwkoop



"The instant that the increasing finish of the picture begins to be paid for by the loss of the faintest shadow of an idea, all finish is a deformity."

"Nature is always mysterious and secret in her use of means, and art is always likest her when it is most inexplicable."

"As people try honestly to see all they can of anything, they come to a point where a noble dimness begins. They see more than others, but they feel they cannot see all, and the more intense their perception the more the crowd of things which they partly see will multiply upon them, and their delight may at last principally consist in dwelling on this cloudy part of their prospect, somewhat casting aside what to them has become comparatively common, but is perhaps all that other people see."

"The more the eye of the painter is cultivated, the more of light and colour it will perceive, the less of substance."

"The aim of the great inventive landscape painter must be to give the far higher and deeper truth of mental vision, rather than that of the physical facts, and to reach a representation which, though it may be, when tried by rule and measure, totally unlike the place, shall yet be capable of producing on the beholder's mind the impression which the reality would have produced, had he verily descended into the valley from the gorges of Airolo."

"Yet, here and there, once in a couple of centuries, one man will rise past clearness and become dark with excess of light."

And, indeed, Ruskin's lofty ideas about art are only fully seen in his splendid appreciation of the greatness of Turner, whose reputation stands supreme, not for the accurate knowledge of form which he undoubtedly possessed, but for his unrivalled power of imagination, which, with his great gift for

colour, enabled him to paint on canvas what Wordsworth dreamed of in verse :

" Ah ' then if mine had been the painter's hand
To express what then I saw ; and add the gleam
The light that never was on sea or land."

" The idea of what a work of art is," said Mr. W. Brymner R.C.A., in an interesting lecture on painting, " is very vague in the minds of most people. I think the majority are satisfied it is the faithful copying of objects or individuals. From the earliest times and writers on art extolling paintings, not because they said something, but because they were deceptively lifelike. Zeuxes painted grapes the birds pecked at. Vasari continually praises the deceptive painting, and Leonardo said that a painter's best master was the mirror. What is it, then, that elevates a painting from the mere representation of objects to the level of a work of art? Zola describes art as 'a corner of nature seen through a temperament.' That is, that an artist must, before he begins his picture, have experienced some emotion, some thought suggested by the view of nature before him. The artist conveys to us the feeling he has experienced by perhaps making everything very real to us and true, but all as seen from his standpoint. He leaves out, does not see, the sides of the question that do not emphasize his argument. He wishes to convey the idea he has, and everything tending to give form to that idea he uses. Everything not helpful to this end he leaves out. In conveying a great truth, he may sacrifice inconsequent facts. I believe, however, that this is done unconsciously. The artist thinks he is copying what he sees, because he feels so strongly from his point of view. Of course, this is open to discussion; but if the imagination is true imagination and not merely a grotesque play of fancy, the mind must be in some such condition. Many can learn to copy nature. Few are artists who can make us see and feel with them. The real artist makes us see even the simple.



E. 1, Morning in Holland



things in a new light. We feel to be true what he shows us, although we have never thought of it in that way before. Thus an artist, although he imitates nature and reproduces its external forms, must throw the light of his individual thought upon it, and this thought or emotion that he conveys by means of nature must be his own thought, or some emotion he has personally experienced, and his manner of expressing himself must be proper to himself." The point mentioned by Mr. Brymner that the act of the artist in leaving out unnecessary facts, or even changing them, is performed unconsciously, is a very interesting one. It is alluded to by Ruskin, who says: "In making these changes Turner does not think at all. They come into his head involuntarily. An entirely imperative dream has taken possession of him; he can see and do no otherwise than as the dream directs. No happy chance, nay, no happy thought, no perfect knowledge, will ever take the place of that mighty unconsciousness." In such cases as that of Turner painting Loch Awe, or putting one of the villages of France on the opposite side of the river to make a better picture, or "striking off the refractory summit of Mount Pilatus" as its lines did not compose well with the rest of the picture of Lucerne, it is difficult to realize that the act was an entirely unconscious one. But generally it does seem most probable that the artist feels what he must paint, what he must leave out, and the manner in which he must paint, without any distinct consciousness that he is changing what he sees, or giving other than the truthful impression of the scene before him.

Prof. Robert MacDougall, in an article on the "Æsthetic Reconstruction of Experience," in the *McGill University Magazine* for December, 1903, writes: "The artist's aim is to affect, to impress, to move. He represents the object in such a way that the effect produced upon himself shall be reproduced in the beholder. He seeks to communicate his own mood. Not to understand, but to feel and respond con-

stitutes one the recipient of the artistic impulse. Power, not truth, is the test of all creative quality. Truth, indeed, must be there, but it is truth of impression, which is sincerity, not truth of description. The principles which artistic work embodies are inconsistent with descriptive truth. It observes no limits prescribed by actual experience, it seeks no transcription of fact. The artist freely dissolves and recombines his material in forms determined solely by that vision of inner unity which it is his function to express in objective forms. Aesthetic appreciation presupposes an apprehension of the artist's interpretation of the world and the appearance of an emotion kindred with his. Understanding waits upon inspiration, for the apprehension of beauty cannot be clarified by any elaborateness of explanation." And in *Amiel's Journal* we read: "To-day we have been talking of realism in painting and of that poetical and artistic illusion which does not aim at being confounded with reality itself. The object of true art is only to charm the imagination, not to deceive the eye. When we see a good portrait we say, 'It is alive!' In other words, our imagination lends it life. We see what is given us, and we give on our side. A work of art ought to set the poetical faculty in us to work to complete our perceptions of a thing. Sympathy is a first condition of criticism."

Thus there are two ways of painting a landscape, and there are two points of view from which the painting may be studied. The artist, in the first place, may give us merely an exact likeness of the external view, well and carefully painted as to technique; or, secondly, if endowed with the capacity to do so, the same view, but after passing through and being influenced by his own personality, the accuracy of detail and the carefulness of the drawing subordinated to matters of more importance. The observer, similarly, may stand aloof and criticize the painting's merits or faults from the technical or realistic standpoint, finding out the difficulties that have been



A Sandy Bay



The F. ...



overcome, and generally looking as it were from the outside. Or he may endeavour to enter into the spirit of the artist, and try to feel the way in which he was affected by the scene and the message he sought to give on his canvas, looking from the inside, and in sympathetic union with the artist. These are the two points of view, the objective and the subjective. It is the subjective that is of vital importance, and that has the lasting and impressive effect. We can all see the correctness of details and the technical skill of the worker for ourselves. We want great artists to show us deeper and more hidden truths.

"Nature is apparent on the surface of things. To find the man requires deeper sight," as Mr. H. A. Poore,* a very interesting writer on art, well puts it. "The landscape painter becomes an interpreter of moods, his own as well as nature's, and in his selection of these he reveals himself. What he takes from nature, he puts back out of himself. Does he make you listen with him to the soft, low music when nature is kindly and tender and lovable, or is his stuff of that robust fibre which makes her companionable to him in her ruggedness and strength?"

" ' Back of the canvas that throbs
the painter is hinted and hidden,
Into the statue that breathes
the soul of the sculptor is bidden.' "

We, therefore, must come to the conclusion that when an artist is able to make us feel the loveliness or mystery of a scene, and to communicate through his work the emotions that stir him, he shows the possession of a rare power. It is

* "Pictorial Composition and the Critical Judgment of Pictures," Henry R. Poore, A.N.A. New York: The Baker & Taylor Company. In this book Mr. Poore draws special attention to the great importance of composition in pictures. "Without good composition there can be no great picture." After giving the different forms of composition which have gradually, and probably unconsciously, been evolved by the masters of painting, Mr. Poore continues with chapters on different subjects of great interest to "students and lovers of art," for whom the book is written.

difficult enough for the figure painter, who has the assistance given by the expression of the features, to move us by the emotion he feels. It is very much more difficult to do this by means of pure landscape. When this is realized, we know that paintings of landscape that have this power of moving us are different from all others, not only in degree but in kind. They belong to a different and a higher order of art. The ability to see and realize this comes only with time, as undoubtedly the first feeling of the student or observer is to look for mere likeness. He cannot, indeed, understand any other view of pictures, until he feels the effect of imagination and idealism as shown in them. Then all is changed. He has learned what to look for, he feels the new influence, and lives in a different world.

This poetic reflective and imaginative representation by the artist of what he sees and feels constitutes great art, as distinguished from merely technical dexterity, and shows the ordinary observer of nature, to his greatly added delight, much more than he can see for himself. As Emerson says, "the painter should give the suggestion of a fairer creation than we know." This is what Turner meant when he answered the critic who said he never saw such colours in nature, "Don't you wish you *could* see them?" But in much of the art criticism of the inner circles it is held that fancy and passion have no place in painting. Technical ability remains the great standard of judgment. Notwithstanding this, the forces that have moved the world in all matters have been the dreamers and the imaginers, since the time when the great statesman of Egypt, the dreamer of dreams, showed the close connection between the ideal and the practical. In all true art it is the thrilling power that tells. The mechanical side, the organ of expression, must, of course, be made as perfect as possible, but not the absolutely accurate performer is the true artist. No! great technical skill alone only leaves us cold, comfortless and



Low Tide, Zealand



unsatisfied. But *he* is the master, the musician who stirs us to the hidden depths of our nature, and calls the tears to our eyes—the orator who plays on his hearers as on the strings of a harp—the painter who makes us feel!

The poets, similarly give us many descriptions of nature, but their most affecting passages are those in which the human element is bound up with the natural, and nature is joyful or sad in response to the feelings of the writer. Mere description in poetry is something like mere accuracy in painting. The higher art is to appeal to the imagination and feeling through the words. In a fine chapter on the poetry of Sir Walter Scott, Ruskin tries to prove that his habit was not of looking at nature as changed by his own feelings, in the way Tennyson regards it, but as having an animation and pathos of *its own*, wholly irrespective of human presence or passion. He paints nature as it is in itself—bright, serene, or gloomy. But we think few people will agree with Ruskin in this. Scott's descriptions of nature are very beautiful, but, like other great artists, he often, and in his finest passages descriptive of nature, reflects the moods of man, as the following instances will show.

In the conclusion of the touching song,

" And high and low the influence know,
But where is County Guy?"

what matters it, the beauty and loveliness of the night? It is all a sad and weary affair unless shared with County Guy. And what suggestions nature makes to the aged minstrel, describing the battle, in the "Lady of the Lake":

" So darkly glooms yon thunder-cloud,
That swathes as with a purple shroud
Benledi's distant hill.
Is it the thunder's solemn sound
That mutters deep and dread,
Or echoes from the groaning ground
The warriors' measured tread?"

And what regret this beautiful description of sunset brings

with it, recalling happier hours, ere they faded away and were gone like the setting sun :

" The sultry summer day is done,
The western hills have hid the sun,
But mountain peak and village spire
Retain reflection of his fire.
And Stanmore's ridge, behind that lay,
Rich with the spoils of parting day,
In crimson and in gold arrayed,
Streaks yet awhile the closing shade,
Then slow resigns to darkening heaven
The tints which brighter hours had given."

How sad are the thoughts that arise when looking on a scene that has changed.

" And on the landscape as I look,
Naught do I see unchanged remain,
Save the rude cliffs and chiming brook.
To me they make a heavy moan
Of early friendships, past and gone."

The following pathetic lines show clearly how deeply he felt that nature reflected the changing feelings of man :

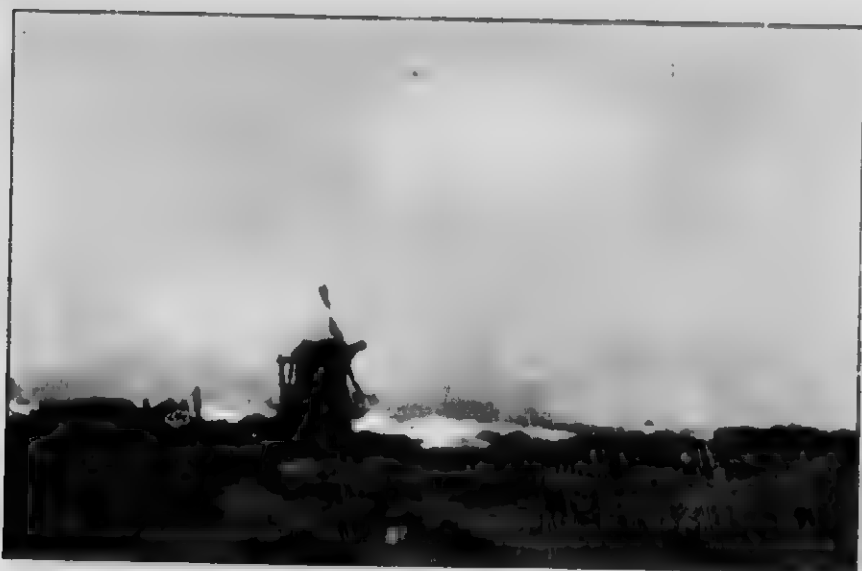
" The sun upon the Weirclaw Hill,
In Ettrick's Vale, is sinking sweet,
The westland wind is hushed and still,
The lake lies sleeping at my feet.

" Yet not the landscape to mine eye
Bears those bright hues that once it wore,
Though evening, with her richest dye,
Flames o'er the hills of Ettrick's shore.

" The quiet lake, the balmy air,
The mill, the stream, the tower, the tree,
Are they the same as once they were,
Or is the dreary change in me?

" To aching eyes each landscape lowers,
To feverish pulse each gale blows chill,
And Araby's or Eden's bowers
Were barren as this moorland hill."

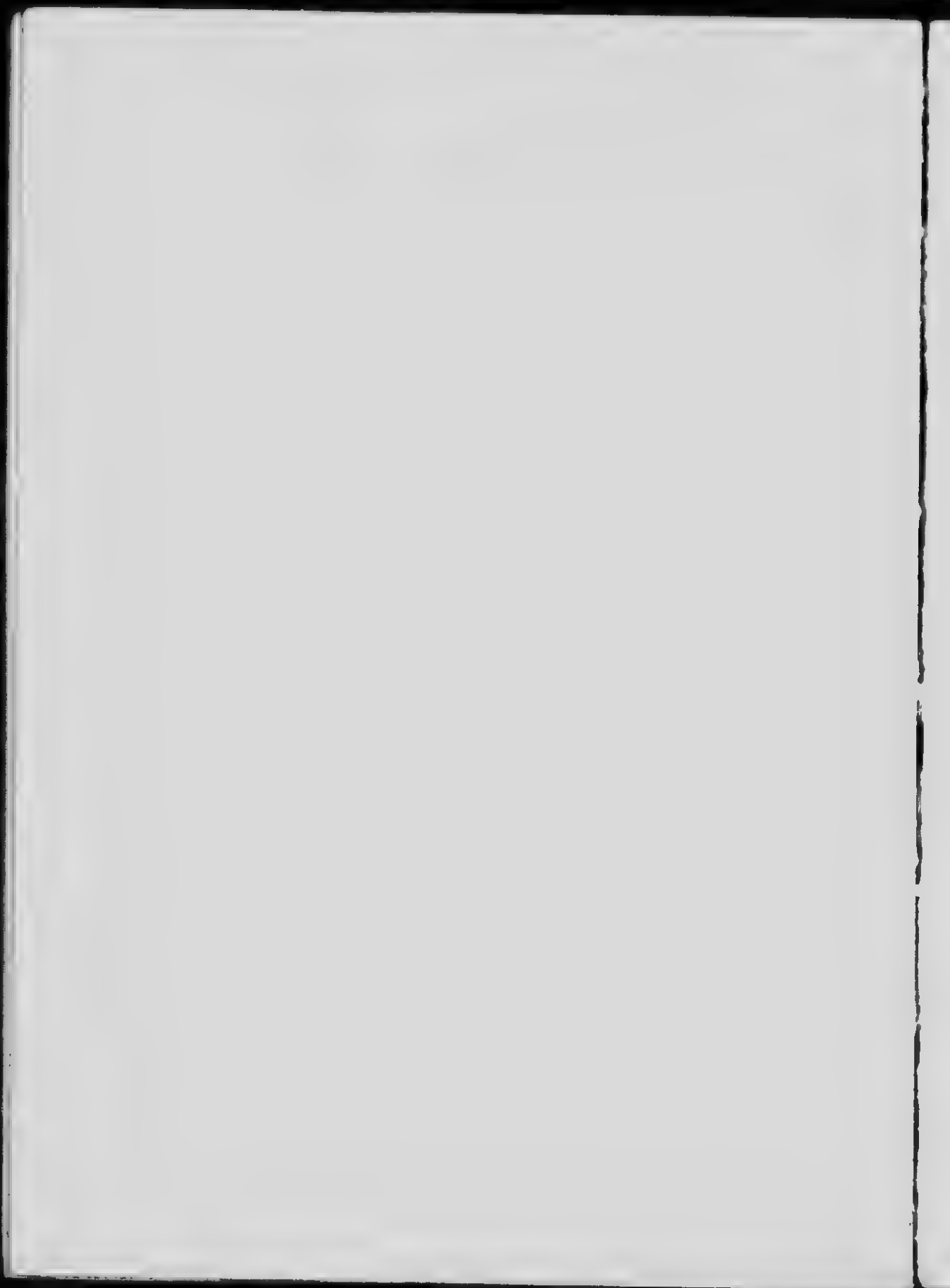
This poem shows how subjective at times was Scott's view of nature, and, indeed, he seems here to refute Ruskin's argument



A Windmill by the Sand Dunes



Dunes in the foreground



in his own verse. That nature is not always sad to the poets, we see in Wordsworth's beautiful poem, describing, from a bed of sickness, the effect of his recalling the daffodils he had seen in his walk waving in the breeze:

" And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils."

But the general effect of nature on the poetic temperament seems undoubtedly to be a sad one. Thus Tennyson writes:

" Tears—idle tears—
Rise in the heart and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn fields
And thinking of the days that are no more."

and Burns:

" Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?"

So Rossetti, in that vision of human grief, "The Blessed Damosel":

" To one, it is ten years of years.
Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me, her hair
Fell all about my face;
Nothing: the autumn fall of leaves
The whole year sets apace."

which poem is almost surpassed in sadness by his "Sunset Wings":

" To-night this sunset spreads two golden wings
Cleaving the western sky;
Winged, too, with wind and winnowings
Of birds; as if the day's last hour in rings
Of strenuous flight must die.
Even thus hope's hours, in ever eddying flight,
To many a refuge tend.
With the first light she laughed, and the last light
Glowed round her still; who nathless in the night
At length must make an end.

.....
And oh! thou dying day,
Even as thou goest, must she, too, depart,
And sorrow fold such pinions on the heart
As will not fly away?"

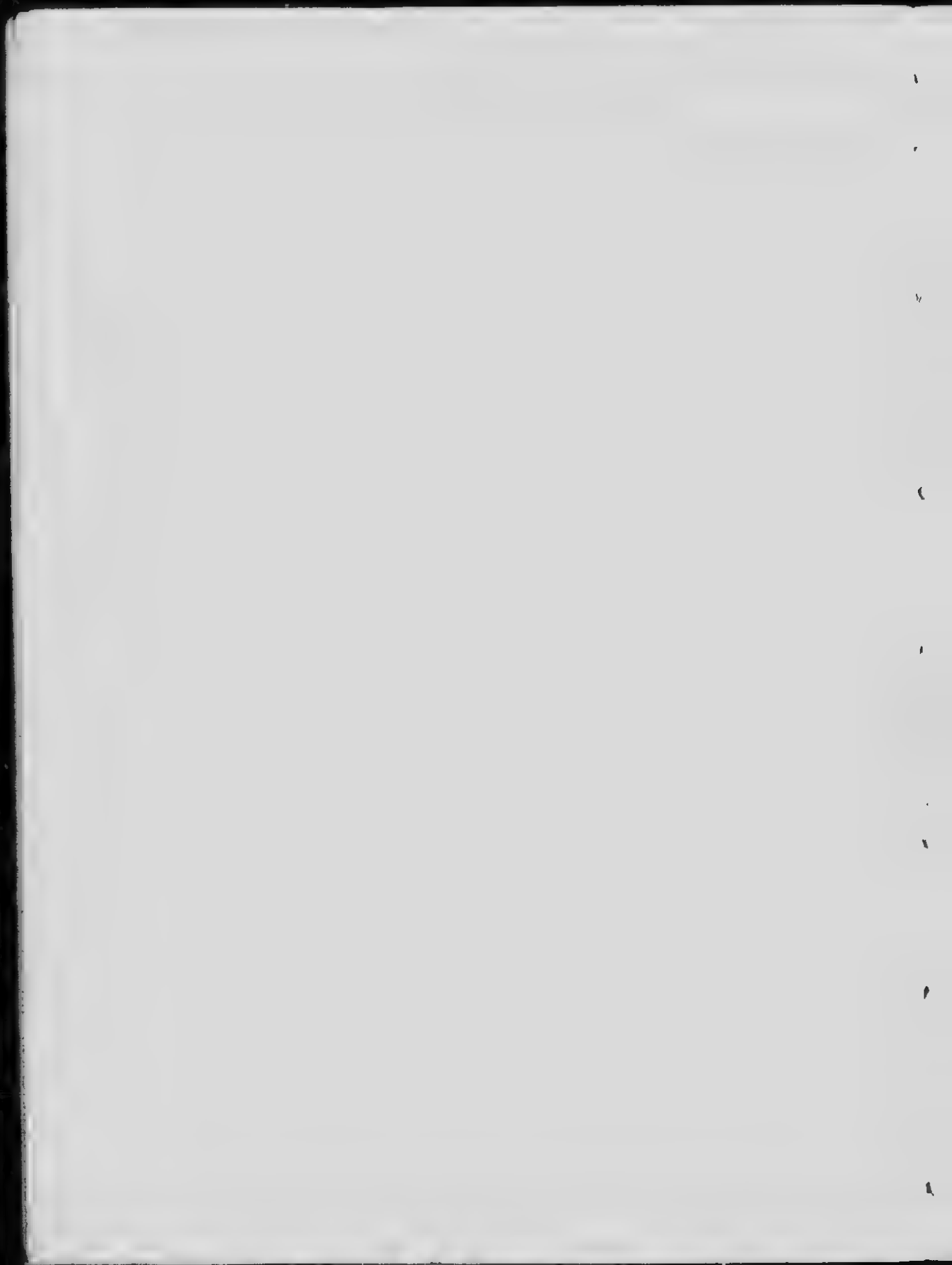
And the dramatist of old writes: "There is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease; but man wasteth away, and where is he?"

It is important to consider this subjective view of nature in the poets; for the painter in words and the painter in colour work toward the same end, both seeking to inspire the thoughts and move the feelings of the people they appeal to in their different ways. The poets have the advantage of being able to relate a story, and are not limited to one action or one period of time. The painters have in their works the powerful attraction of colour and form. But both must strive to give the spirit, if they would attain the rank of masters. So we find that in painting the greatest power will always be with those artists who have this sympathetic imagination, who are able to discern the poetical in the actual, the ideal in the real, the universal in the particular. They alone can produce those glorious "speaking" pictures which continually reveal the ideas and feelings that possessed the artist when his brush was touched by a power that he knew not of.

In a very interesting book that has helped many people toward a correct appreciation of paintings, "How to Judge of a Picture," published some years ago by Mr. John C. Van Dyke, special emphasis is laid on the possession of this poetic feeling by the artist, in the following passage: "When, in addition to this painter's sense (technical skill), an artist begins to see things in nature that we do not, he becomes an interpreter of hidden beauty, a revealer of unknown truths, a translator of an unknown language. The subjective element of thought or poetry is coming in for recognition. He sees or feels something that surpasses complete description and which he can only indicate in his picture. The object of every true artist is to discover hidden beauty and reveal it to the world. The work of men like Millet, Mauve and Israels was entirely un-



Among the Rees



known and unseen before these painters came into the world. In a similar manner, there is a new beauty in the light of Corot, the foliage of Rousseau, the voyaging clouds of Daubigny, and the cattle of Troyon."

The seven Dutch artists we have already spoken of form a unique group, inasmuch as their paintings have this strong subjective phase, this revealing of nature, and of their own feelings unconsciously inspired by nature, and because, in addition to this, they each see the subjects they paint in an absolutely different way from anyone who has preceded them. They have shown us new phases of art, they have expressed the ideas that possessed them in new and varied forms, and they have transferred their thoughts to canvas with masterly execution in a large and noble manner and dignified style, giving the impression of power in reserve. As usually happens with strong and original characters, they have inspired others, who see more or less through their eyes, but they themselves are creators. They have caught a spark of the divine fire of genius, and stand splendidly alone.

The last portion of the nineteenth century will be remembered in art as the time when the work of these men, whose powers gradually developed to the end of their lives, reached its highest point. Matthew Maris, the wonderful painter of dreams, whose canvases are the artists' and the picture-lovers' delight; Josef Israels, the father of the school, the revered of his countrymen, the sympathetic portrayer of the homes and occupations of the peasants of the land, and William Maris, the unrivalled painter of cattle and river scenes, sparkling in the sunshine, are the only ones that survive of the original band that has revolutionized Dutch art. The rest have passed away; Bosboom—but not his visions of spacious churches permeated with light and air, the sunbeam pouring its rays through the windows, radiating warmth everywhere, lingering lovingly round the great pillars, and half revealing the darkness of the dim recesses beyond;

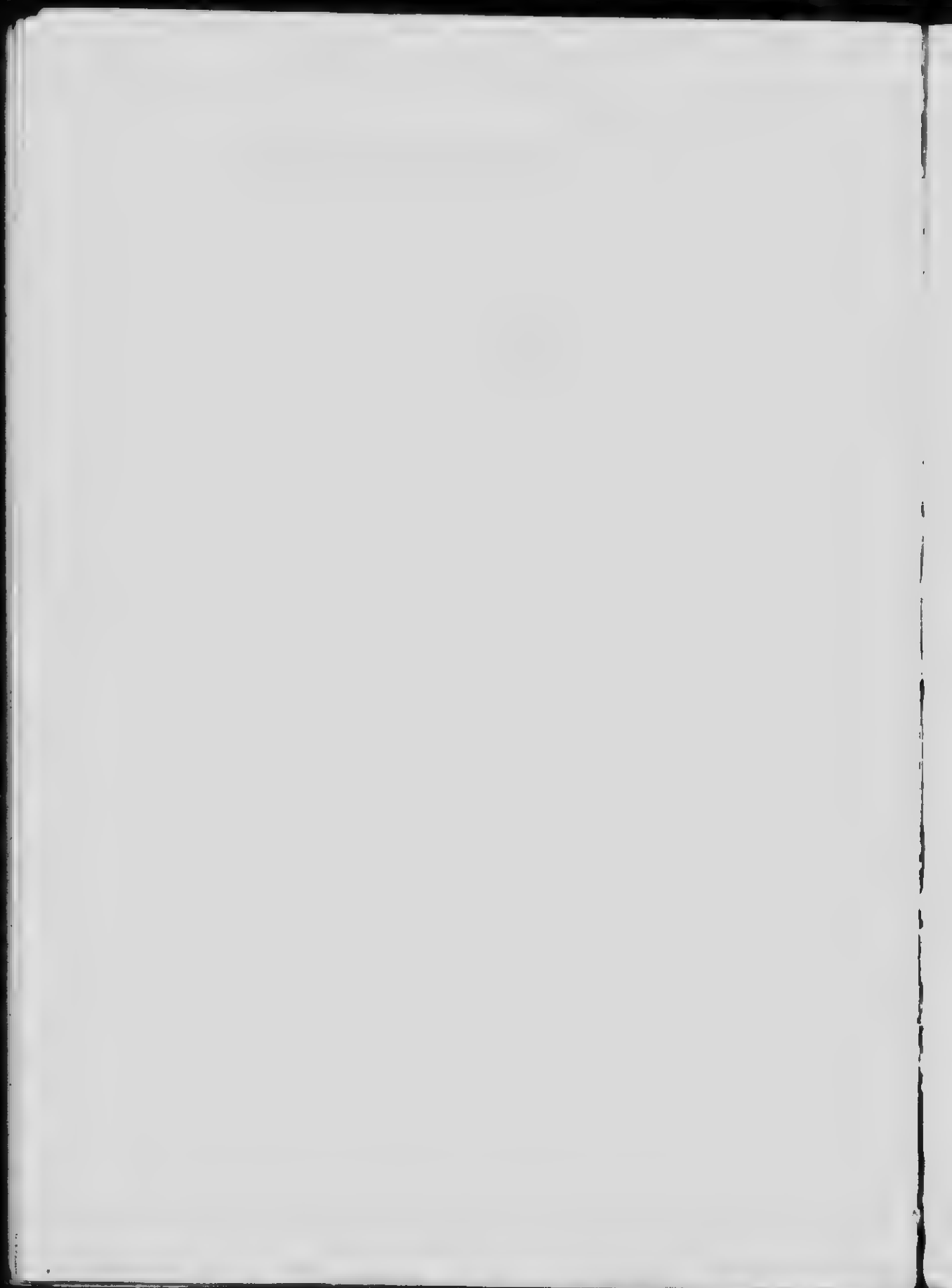
Mauve—but not his landscapes, with ploughmen, cattle or flocks of sheep, all bathed in atmosphere, and painted with a rare tenderness and beauty; James Maris—but not those vigorous and boldly-handled sea-shores, canals, and grand, massive, cloudy skies, which have made him famous; and Weissenbruch—but not his poetical renderings of the Holland he loved so well, the clear, cool morning skies, the darkening shades of evening, and the mysteries of moonlight he delighted in.

The recent death of Weissenbruch, which occurred early in 1903, has removed a well-known figure from the artistic world of Holland. His was one of those happy, cheerful natures that enjoy a simple life completely occupied with the art they love. Like Corot, he spread sunshine around him. He was bound up in his work, and was greatly loved by his fellow-artists, who looked up to him with admiration. One of them, Mr. Smissaert, writes: "Among the older generation Weissenbruch holds a prominent place; for who depicts as well as he the effect of the sun struggling through stormy clouds, or who appreciates better the value of light and shade? Who remains so young and enthusiastic? Who, indeed, but Weissenbruch, whose pictures fill us with delight, and create an impression on our minds not easily forgotten. He sees nature through the medium of his temperament, which is warm and sensitive—a temperament to which all that is great and noble appeals. His whole being is deeply affected by the beauty of natural scenery, and he is in perfect harmony with what he depicts. Wherever he paints, whether oils or water colours, it is always the same as far as beauty is concerned, and no one will dispute the fact that he is other than a great artist."

Weissenbruch was born in 1834 and died in 1903. He had a strong and robust constitution and clear mental vision. He was a most entertaining companion, being a delightful talker, and having an inexhaustible fund of anecdote. As a



J. H. Wendt



young man he studied under Shelfhout and Van Hove. Here he learned to draw with accuracy and great detail, and we occasionally see examples now of this careful, painstaking work. After leaving his teachers, following the advice of Bosboom, he continued to work for many years in the same thorough manner, studying nature earnestly and leaving nothing undone that could add to his knowledge and experience. Later on he found himself, and left his early formal manner. Gradually his style changed, and his brush work grew vigorous and broad. He discovered how much he could leave out, in trying to give the essentials only, to secure that simplicity and suggestiveness, the best part of every work of art. The beginner sees only detail, the artist sees the essence and suggests detail. Here it is that so many fail. They cannot see what are the essentials. Happy they who can, and are enabled to subordinate everything else, leaving out the "prose of nature and giving only the spirit and splendor."

A time comes to every artist, after he has learned the technical side of his art and has become what Ruskin calls a "respectable artificer," when he must begin to give his message and thoughts to the world through the medium of his works. If he has nothing to tell, he is not a living force, no matter how much admiration brilliant technique may draw.* "Ye have

* Dr. Bakewell, of the University of California, in an article in *Hibbert's Journal* for July, 1904, on "Art and Ideas," discusses the question of art for art's sake, from the philosopher's point of view, in the following able manner: "The question that underlies any discussion of the philosophy of art is that of the relation of aesthetics at once to ethics and philosophy, or of the relation to each other of the three ideals that dominate in these three fields, respectively, the Beautiful, the Good, and the True. Are they mutually involved in works of art, or is the realm of the beautiful absolutely independent and self-sufficient? The modern tendency is to rest the case for art on a refined and subtle sensuism. Aesthetics is simply an affair of feeling. It is sufficient unto itself. Art has nothing to do with philosophy or morals, "*Ça marche, et ça m'amuse*"—the thing goes, and it pleases me. The idealist, however, although well aware that the artist simply paints the thing as he sees it, would call attention to the fact that what the artist sees is by no means determined merely by what is there before his eyes, but is the result of a selective process, more or less

the Pyrrhic dance as yet—where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?" are the scathing words the great critic quotes for the artist who depicted the luxurious idleness of the Romans in their decline, with fascinating skill, but whose work had no speaking power to his fellow-men. What would be thought of Corot if we only had his early tightly-painted pictures to judge from, and not his *Biblis* or *Le Soir*? What of Mauve, whose great work was in his last years? Indeed, thus does it nearly always happen with true artists. As they grow older they find that the technical perfection they sought for at first is only the language they have to use, and that the all-important matter is to

subconscious, which is determined by what he himself is. If this is true, the great artist must be a man of great character and true vision. His work, while thus being, from one point of view, the simple expression of his inward vision, is in truth not the expression of his inward vision, nor of his personal feeling about things, but rather a creation that forthwith takes its place in the realm of reality. It is more real than the things of nature, not less so. To it one can continually return with fresh interest, for its content is inexhaustible. It is thus fraught with meaning, and also indissolubly bound up with the moral ideal. Yet the idealist, quite as much as the aestheticist, objects to the novel with a purpose, and to any supposed work of art that has an obvious meaning or moral written over it. To him such a meaning is condemned by its very obviousness as shallow and superficial. Nature's meanings are large and elusive and difficult of comprehension. The issue is not whether or no the work of art, as such, appeals primarily to the purely appreciative rather than the reflective and moral sides of man's nature, since both are in agreement on this point. It is rather whether the realm of beauty is so distinct and independent that the ideals of truth and moral goodness have no structural part in it. There was a time when psychology viewed man as if he could be divided into distinct faculties of feeling, will and intellect. If there is one advance more sure than another, it is that marked by the abandonment of this whole-faculty view. The entire self is involved in every act of consciousness, and the attempt of aestheticists to keep the world of feeling sundered from the realm of morals and of reason is simply a return to this antiquated piecemeal-view of man. In truth, it is not a fragment of man that is involved in aesthetic judgments, but the whole man; and, therefore, we may be sure that a supposed work of art, if it offends morals and reason, yes, if it do not contribute to morality and rationality, is bad art, and in the long run will not please. And we can see the real significance of the cry, "Art for art's sake." It is quite legitimate to abstract this aspect of experience from the reason and the will, and consider it in its totality apart from them. And yet we can be very sure that a work of art, if it is to appeal to the complete man, and not to an abstraction substituted for man, cannot continue to please if it shock the ideals of the good and the true."



A Bright Day



Evening Reflections



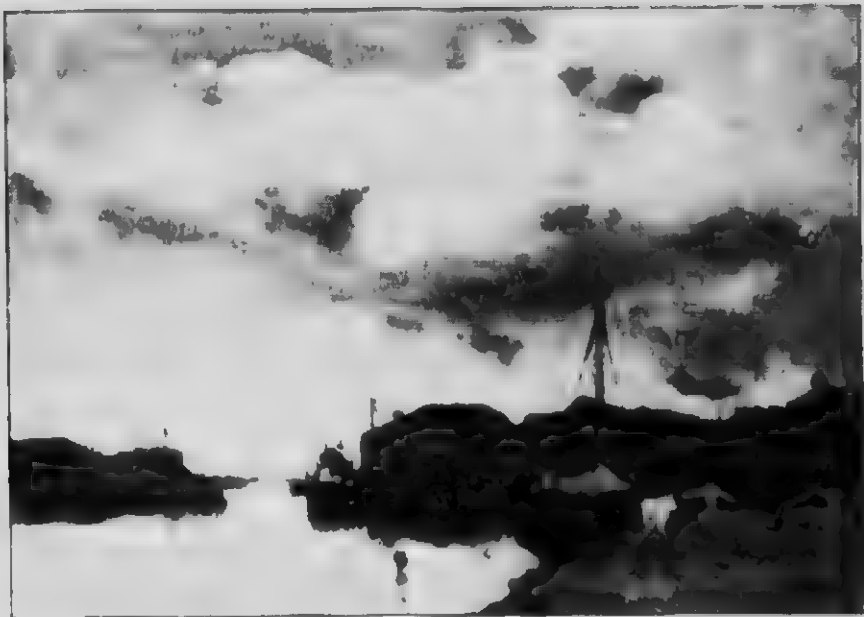
use the language they have learned, to render in proper manner the big things in nature and in art as they appear to the sympathetic imagination of the artist. Possessed by this idea their work grows broader and broader, though to the beholders apparently more simple, through the perfect mastery of the subject. Thus it was with Weissenbruch, and, charming as his work always is, it is in his last period that his real genius is expressed. For this his whole life had been the preparation. "It took Weissenbruch," said a Dutch critic, "sixty years to learn how to paint that picture of the Storm on the Coast of Zeeland." "How easy to do that," we are apt to exclaim, as we look at one of his simple sea-shore subjects, just a vast expanse of sea, sky and shore, with a boat on the water or a figure on the sand! That is our first impression, and only after careful study do we observe the skilful composition* of

* If a picture be not a mere copy of nature, but a creation of the mind of the artist, it follows that as a work of art, it must be carefully composed out of the materials supplied by nature. Composition is thus of primary importance to the artist and must be the foundation of the technical side of his painting. This subject is treated very fully and ably, and in very attractive style in the book on Pictorial Composition already referred to (page 25) to which we are indebted for the extracts from Whistler and Sir Joshua Reynolds given in this note. The author says that some of the impressionists of to-day seem to place little importance on the matter, and he quotes one of them as follows "opposed to the miserable law of composition, symmetry, balance, arrangements of parts, filling up space, as though nature does not do that ten thousand times better, in her own pretty way"; and adds "the assertion that composition is a part of nature's law, that it is done by her and well done, we are glad to hear in the same breath of invective that seeks to annihilate it." But Whistler sees farther and knows better than this impressionist, and writes in his incisive way "The artist is bound to pick and choose and group with science the elements of his picture, that the result may be beautiful, as the musician gathers his notes, and forms his chords, until he brings forth from chaos, glorious harmony. To say to the painter that nature is to be taken as she is, is to say to the player that he may sit on the piano. That nature is always right is an assertion artistically as untrue, as it is one whose truth is universally taken for granted. It might almost be said that nature is usually wrong, that is to say the condition of things that shall bring about the perfection of harmony, worthy a picture is rare, and not common to all." Any one who had the pleasure of seeing the Whistler Exhibition in Boston, in 1904, must have been struck with the very fine composition displayed in his works. The greatest attention is paid to this and to maintaining the interest of the observer, which is not

beautiful forms and graceful lines, in the use of which he is a master, which rivets the attention on the different important features, so that the eye does not leave the picture, but moves from one accentuated point to another, usually in an irregular ever-returning and always interesting circle. The aerial perspective, with its subtle gradations of colour, the atmospheric sky, and the absolutely right tone throughout, complete the effect the painter sought to produce. In truth, the art displayed is consummate, and needs the information, knowledge and experience of a lifetime. But great, indeed, as is the skill and knowledge of Weissenbruch, it is not this alone that compels our admiration, but the fact that it is all dominated by his own personality—that he lives and speaks through his works.

We have pleasure in being able to give the following fine appreciation of Weissenbruch and his work by Mr. E. F. B.

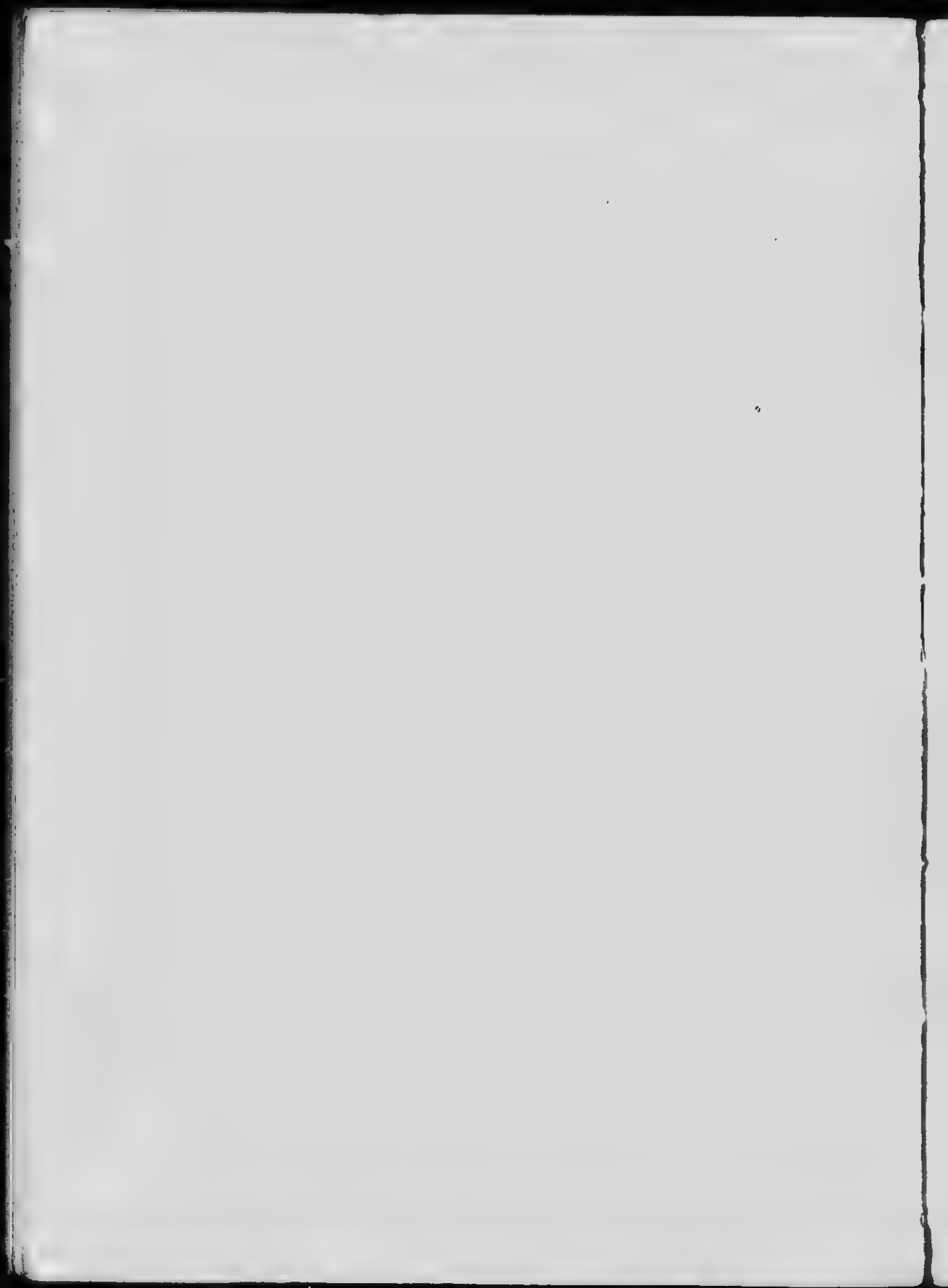
allowed to wander out of the canvas, but is held and attracted by the varied points of interest chosen and emphasized by the artist. He knows that "anything" will not make a picture, no matter what the skill of the artist may be. Science must be there, but must not obtrude itself. "The picture which looks most like nature to the uninitiated will probably show the most attention to the rules of the artist." Turner is reported to have said that nature gave him a great deal of trouble in painting his pictures. "It must of necessity be", says Sir Joshua Reynolds, "that even works of genius as they must have their cause, must also have their rules. Unsubstantial as these may seem, and difficult as it may be to convey them in writing, they are still seen and felt in the mind of the artist, and he works from them with as much certainty as if they were embodied upon paper". The great artists in the past discovered or adopted instinctively as the best for the composition of their pictures, certain forms based on the triangle, as an example in Raphael's Dresden "Madonna", the circle in Corot's "Ville d'Avray", the cross, in Guido Reni's "Crucifixion", and the curved line, in Ruben's "Descent from the Cross". In looking over any collection of the great pictures of the world, it is evident that these fundamental forms, with variations, appealed to the artistic sense of the painters, or were found out by them, for they are used in their greatest works, and their use continues to the present day. Following his illustrious predecessors, we find from an examination of his paintings that Weissenbruch had a very sensitive feeling for beauty of subject in his pictures and gave careful attention to the recognized rules of composition. Yet so natural do his paintings seem, so unconscious of effort do they appear, that the observer remains wondering to the end whether after all, the artist has not simply seen and felt it all beautiful and true, just as he shews it to us without bothering about rules of art.



Small boat in the harbor



A boat in the harbor



Johnston, K.C., of Toronto, one of the first in Canada to appreciate the charm and beauty of Weissenbruch's pictures.

"Nature always has impressed on its face the feeling of loneliness. There is nothing so expressive of solitude as the clear, sunny, summer day. The stretch of fields bathed in sunlight, the woods casting their deep shadows ending in mystery; the peaceful blue sky above, with here and there a fleecy cloud, orphaned and alone, in the deep expanse: all these things appeal to the quiet and sympathetic side of our nature, and find a congenial resting-place in our most reflective moods. Then come the gray days and ashen skies, the big driving masses of cloud, and the gloom of approaching night. Even winter, with all its glittering whiteness, is as solemn in its grandeur as the stillness of the dark woods at midnight. These phases of nature impress us with solitary and lonely sentiments, because they are vast and almost infinite in their majesty and power, and man's physical and spiritual being becomes insignificant in their presence. To portray this feeling was Weissenbruch's mission. The solitary foot-traveller by the edge of the canal as evening approaches, the envelopment of all things in the mantle of shadow or sunshine, the lonely tree standing out against the great background of land and sky, the boat on the mysterious and never-ending sea; these were his favourite subjects, and excited his deepest sympathy. All such scenes as these are big and simple, and the great characteristic of his works are space and simplicity. He faithfully portrayed the moods of nature, not her physical beauties or topographical character. A bit of water, land or sky was to him as important, as beautiful, and as expressive of nature's moods as the most perfect composition. A few reeds and a glimpse of a canal made a picture; a simple meadow with a few cattle was, in his hands, a poem; a windmill and a lonely farm-house became a passage of dreamland. He looked not for subject alone, but sought out the temperament and

sympathy of his theme, and gave expression to these things with an unerring regard to technique, colour and composition. As a painter he was real and absolutely true to nature, but his reality is that of pathos and feeling, his truth that of the heart and mind. Beyond all the artists of the last fifty years, he is the real as well as the spiritual exponent of the beautiful, the true and the sympathetic. His finest works are the trusted companions of our solitude, and never fail to join in the harmony of the thoughts that seek to be alone. They speak, but it is in language that, perhaps, few hear and fewer of us fully understand or appreciate. And as we go back to our boyhood dreams and aspirations, and the 'long, long thoughts of youth,' so we turn to our friends given to us by Weissenbruch, and cling to them when the works of men even greater than he in the eyes of the world's critics grow cold and lifeless.

"This is the way the pictures of Weissenbruch appeal to those who appreciate their beauty and tenderness of feeling. And in this sense, perhaps, no man ever attained the rank of Weissenbruch as a purely landscape painter. He quickens our sense of beauty and our highest perception of truth by his great and simple loneliness, and draws us into harmony with the fitful moods of nature's ever varying temperament. There is no false pretence, no jarring note in his work or its methods. The power of his pictures lies in the fact that they create in our minds sympathy with their moods and a fellow-feeling in their company. They touch some chord that lies hidden, and which answers only to the mysterious call of a power greater than itself, and yet in unison with it. Thus must Weissenbruch, as time goes on, appeal to and reach an ever-widening circle that is bounded only by the limits of thought and human joy and sadness."

Of all purely landscape painters, Weissenbruch is the most typically Dutch in his art. He never strays afield or wanders to other lands for subjects. For him it is not necessary.



Harbour Scene

For round about Haarlem, the Hague or Noorden, on the sandy shore of Scheveningen or on the flats of Zeeland, he finds material for a lifetime; warm, sunny skies, storm and rain, the great solemn sea, and the ever-changing, soft, vaporous atmosphere. These big things are the scenes he loves to paint, and here his art is at home. No one since Constable lived has painted moving skies, with clouds and storm effects, like the Dutch artists James Maris and Weissenbruch, the former the more vigorous and robust, the latter the more tender in treatment. Weissenbruch once said: "Only let me get the sky and clouds right in my pictures, and the rest is easy. Atmosphere and light are the great sorcerers. All we want comes from above. We cannot work too hard to get the atmosphere. This is the secret of a good picture." And if one thing were selected as Weissenbruch's special achievement in art it would be his wonderful painting of sky, sea and land, so as to produce the effect of free, open, air-filled space. In this he seems already to be the painter of the future.

It may seem a bold thing to say to-day that Weissenbruch, as a landscape painter, is one of the most original and one of the greatest artists that Holland has produced, not excepting even the artists of the seventeenth century. It might be easier seen to be true, however, if we could close our eyes to the glamour thrown over the past by time, if we could get away from the authority of tradition, and if we could forget the commercial value of things for a while. It is very difficult to do this, often impossible, as the history of art has repeatedly shown in the past.

On the dicta of the leaders of the classical school in France, their countrymen rejected Delacroix, Millet, Corot and Manet. Constable met with similar lack of appreciation in England, and a painting of Whistler's was hissed when exhibited in London. In every age there are the same kind of people claiming authority in art matters, who are on the side of tradi-

tion and a past phase of art. Time alone is the true arbiter, and the final opinion of the public will be right. In comparing a painter of to-day with artists of other times, it must be remembered that in many ways the art of painting improves as each generation passes. It is not a lost art, like the manufacture of Limoges enamel, or the stained glass of the Middle Ages, or the coloured porcelain of China. On the contrary, each new school has given its quota of knowledge and discovery. Constable, Turner, Corot and Manet have each added to the living ideas of the world. In a recent lecture, Mr. George Clausen, the well-known artist, said: "Turner was the first to paint colour in the shadows as well as in the light;" and "though from some of the work of the modern impressionists we might turn with more respect to the older painters, still something has been gained, and we could not go back again to brown shadows and degraded tones." And Mr. Poore writes: "Masterful composition of many figures has never been surpassed in certain examples of the old masters; but in the case of portrait composition of two figures, it is worthy of note how far beyond the older are the later masters; or in the grouping of landscape elements, or in the arrangement of figures or animals in landscape, how a finer sense in such arrangement has come to art." So it gradually comes about that the equipment and knowledge of the modern artist is greater than ever before.

Granting that each be possessed of the true artistic temperament, a great artist of to-day should be able to express the thoughts that inspire him more fully and completely than one of two centuries ago. And we may truly say that men of genius *have* appeared in recent times, and that no such landscape work as that of Anton Mauve, James Maris, J. H. Weissenbruch and William Maris has ever before been seen in Holland. They all paint the homely country scenery and the people engaged in their ordinary occupations, and wonderfully beautiful works



Autumn near the Hague



are produced from these simple materials. Everything in their pictures is seen to be surrounded with atmosphere and to dwell in space, and their constant aim is to translate the sunshine, striking in brilliant light on trees or cattle, or diffused over the whole landscape. Their art is intensely modern, original and racy of the soil; strong, broad, vigorous, suggestive and full of deep feeling, and it has the power of enabling others to feel the spirit that moved the artist. Mauve, James Maris and William Maris introduce the human element largely into their pictures, and cattle and animals, as they appear in the daily life of the peasant are prominent objects of interest in their works. But Weissenbruch, whose aim, in his later works, is to give that large feeling of wind-blown or calm and quiet air-containing space which enfolds everything, depends almost entirely upon the simple sea-shore or country scene he is painting to produce the effect he desires and is so successful in obtaining, and in pure landscape he has carried the art to its latest expression.

Writing about the Renaissance, Walter Pater says: "There are a few great painters, like Michelangelo or Leonardo, whose work has become a force in general culture, partly for this very reason that they have absorbed into themselves all lesser workmen. But besides these there is a number of artists who have a distinct faculty of their own, by which they convey to us a peculiar quality of pleasure which we cannot get elsewhere. These, too, must be interpreted by those who have felt their charms." Those who get a peculiar quality of pleasure from Weissenbruch would fain interpret his charm. Surely we have in him one of those rare subjective painters of whom we have been speaking, fully equipped technically; one whose emotions are keenly excited by the beauties of nature, and whose sensitive and poetic temperament enables him to communicate to us the feelings and moods that possessed him; one who seeks for sympathetic appreciation and understanding.

For there is a loneliness, a mystery and poetry about his work, a personal element of sympathy with nature and a knowledge of all her moods, that creates a bond of union with him. He was a child of nature, and this kindly mother taught him her own truth and simplicity, and made him one of her intimates. "To him who holds communion with her visible forms, she speaks a various language." Such communings had he, and various and beautiful is the language he uses. It may not be given to every one to see this. The words of the poet are true, "*L'amour seul voit avec des yeux.*" But those that fall under his influence, especially those who live with his pictures, and feel the intense solitude and silence they depict, the vastness of nature, the littleness of humanity, and the weary labours of man, become devoted followers and grow very fond of the artist and his work. They realize that a poet-painter of gentle soul and lofty ideal dwelt here a while, and, after a long and happy life, with his knowledge and capacity growing to the end, passed away with eye undimmed and power unabated. They feel that his work will live, his fame increase, and his name take rank among the masters.

"Loftily lying—leave him,
Still loftier than the world suspects."



Nearly Home